

Construction continues at Sunset Park

Sunset Park, one of the area's most popular parks, remains under construction with an anticipated completion date at the end of 2012. The current construction project, known as Phase II of the Sunset Park master plan, is an \$11.7 million improvement funded by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act and is nearing a 50% completion milestone.

Improvements in this project include new trails and walking paths in established areas, improvements around Sunset Park Lake, large areas of new turf, new interactive playground features, shade structures, a splash pad area, as well as new restrooms and a pedestrian plaza.

Signage remains in place at the park directing traffic from areas under construction for access and park availability. A new interior roadway will be approaching completion in the next couple of months as well as a new parking area at the park's central hub, the Sunset Park administration building. Some areas, such as playgrounds and roadways, will open to the public as the areas are completed.

Up-to-date information about construction and park availability can be obtained by contacting Clark County Parks and Recreation at (702) 455-8200 or through the Parks and Recreation website at www.ClarkCountyNV.gov.

"This is one of Las Vegas' most popular and heavily used regional parks and this particular facelift is a long time in coming," said Commissioner Mary Beth Scow, who represents the area where the park is located. "I think our residents are going to be very pleased when the work is complete."

Parks and Recreation officials have prepared for construction and the issues that come with it, conferring with an environmentalist to ensure that the many species of waterfowl that make Sunset Park their home will not be negatively impacted during construction. An arborist was also consulted to preserve as many trees as possible surrounding Sunset Lake.

Construction has minimally affected the use of the ball fields, basketball courts and disc golf course at the park and closure of parking lots have been scheduled around the Little League baseball season.

Sunset Park is home to the Age of Chivalry Renaissance Festival each year, which draws more than 40,000 people. The festival, now in its 19th year, will be held again at Silver Bowl Park, located at 6800 E. Russell Rd. This year's event is set for Friday, Oct. 12 through Sunday, Oct. 14, 2012.

Sunset Park is a 325-acre regional park that is recognized as one of the most popular public parks in Southern Nevada. It has been designated the perennial "Best of Las Vegas" Review-Journal pick for the past five years and was selected "Best Park" by Vegas Seven magazine and Yelp.com in 2010.

The land for Sunset Park was acquired in 1967 and contains the last remaining dunes of what once covered most of Paradise Valley. Trails surround the dunes, and a railroad line is visible. More than 200 plant species in the Mojave Desert are found nowhere else on the planet and many of them are preserved at Sunset Park. The park is also home to abundant wildlife. It is one of the last habitats for Phainopepla, a tiny black-crested bird with red eyes that lives among the mesquite trees.

Clark County is making a concerted effort to not only improve Sunset Park, but to also keep the park user friendly during construction. Much of the park contains trails with signage pointing out some of the park's history and remains open during construction. Sunset Park was once home to early ranchers and Paiutes that inhabited the site a thousand years ago and greeted visitors who sought to trade seeds, nuts and turquoise. Water continues to flow under the park and surfaces to provide irrigation to most of the park.